



Making Effective Presentations

By Liz Allen Fey, CEO

Management Solutions Group, LLC

New leaders as well as seasoned leaders can lose their confidence when faced with presenting information in front of a group. Knees knock, voices tremble, ums start rolling off the tongue. You get the picture. In fact, speaking in front of an audience is the most named fear. Here are three tips to help you make clearer and more confident presentations.

One – It's All About the Audience

The first mistake we make in preparing for presentations is thinking that presenting is about us. It's not. It's all about the audience. Once you get that, you can relax, because it's not about you. You are only the vehicle through which the information is being presented. If you are like me, when I finally understood this, I could relax and focus my attention where it was most useful – the audience.

Two – We All Want Something

Whenever we are presenting, we want the audience to do something. It may be to understand our topic better and be advocates. We may want them to make a decision or take an action. Remember, we always want them to do something. So think; what is it that I want them to do? And on any given subject, the audience is at one point of the following five -point continuum: *unaware – aware-understand – believe – act*. So consider where your audience is in relationship to your topic. Do they know it exists and if so, do they understand the importance or impact? Are they already acting on the topic? Consider where they are; and the fact that they may be at different points. Often, we as leaders have lived with a topic for a while and because we get it, we think our audience should “get it”. When they don't we get frustrated and so do they. So consider their level of knowledge and comfort with the topic and then, understand that in any setting – you can only move them *one-two points* down the continuum. Understanding this will help you modify your presentation to move the audience on the continuum.

Three – Three is the Key

We can only take in three main pieces of information in any one setting. That's why I'm only sharing three points. Only three main points in any talk. Only three. Three that can be re-enforced with stories, data, etc. Only three. Presentations that have more than three key points lose their audience. Even the most entertaining presenters who don't follow this rule, will have an appreciative audience who often can't remember what the presentation was about. Consider what three main points the audience needs to take the action you want them to take.

So, the audience is the focus – assess where they are in relation to your topic. Consider what you want or need them to do. And provide them the three key points they need. The end. Oh, and breathe!